

Bryan L. Davis_Written testimonial for SB431 Heari

Uploaded by: Abdilah, Shelby

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Bryan L. Davis. I am a Hearing Interpreter and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As an interested party, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Bryan L. Davis

bldinterpreting@gmail.com

Washington, DC 20019

David Rice_Written testimonial for SB431 Hearing -

Uploaded by: Abdilah, Shelby

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is David Rice. I am a Deaf individual and I live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

David Rice

Davidpaulrice@gmail.com

Gaithersburg, Maryland - 20878

Dr. Risa Shariff_Written testimonial for SB431 Hea

Uploaded by: Abdilah, Shelby

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Dr. Risa Shariff. I am a hearing interpreter and I live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Dr. Risa Shariff

risa.shariff@gmail.com

Baltimore, MD

Fidel Torres_Written testimonial for SB431 Hearing

Uploaded by: Abdilah, Shelby

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Fidel Torres. I am a Hearing interpreter and I live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Fidel Torres

fidel.torres003@gmail.com

Cheverly, MD 20785

Helen Avner_Written testimonial for SB431 Hearing

Uploaded by: Abdilah, Shelby

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Helen Avner. I am a Hearing interpreter and I live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Helen Avner

helenavnerASL@gmail.com

North Potomac, MD 20878

Katherine Perchik_Written testimonial for SB431 He

Uploaded by: Abdilah, Shelby

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Katherine S. Perchik. I am a Hearing interpreter and I work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As an interested party, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Katherine S. Perchik

kperchik@gmail.com

Washington, DC 20009

Matthew Kanka_Written testimonial for SB431 Hearin

Uploaded by: Abdilah, Shelby

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Matthew Kanka. I am a Hearing Interpreter and I live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Matthew Kanka

mkankaasl@gmail.com

College Park, MD 20740

Rayni Plaster Written testimonial for SB431 Hearin

Uploaded by: Abdilah, Shelby

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Rayni Plaster. I am a Deaf individual and I live in Cheverly, Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Rayni Plaster

rayniplaster@gmail.com

Cheverly, MD - 20785

Renee Bertaux _ Written testimonial for SB431 Hear

Uploaded by: Abdilah, Shelby

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Renee Bertaux. I am a Hearing individual and I live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Renee Bertaux

renee.beraux@yahoo.com

Frederick, MD - 21702

SAbdilah written testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Abdilah, Shelby

Position: FAV

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Shelby Abdilah. I am a Hearing Interpreter and member of both the Potomac Chapter of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and Maryland Association of the Deaf. I live in Gaithersburg and work around Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021 sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

For too long, Maryland has had no mechanism for regulating people calling themselves sign language interpreters. As a result, there have been many instances of new signers, with no interpreter training, taking high stakes jobs such as medical, psychological and legal assignments and skewing the message so severely that the ramifications for the deaf individual have often been truly life or death. Even when the consequences aren't deadly, they have a major impact on the ability of deaf individuals to access employment, higher education, safety information, etc.

As a certified interpreter who is actively involved in mentoring up and coming interpreters, I see the necessity of licensure to protect working interpreters and our profession as a whole, but also to protect the next generation from unwittingly being put in circumstances above their skill level by unscrupulous businesses. Licensure, the complaint process provided for by the bill and the legal ramifications act as discouragement for these unethical practices.

I urge you to listen to the testimony from the Deaf community and see that the need for licensure of interpreters in the state of Maryland is long overdue.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Shelby Abdilah CI,CT

Stephanie Sforza Written testimonial for SB431 Hea

Uploaded by: Abdilah, Shelby

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Stephanie Sforza. I am a Deaf individual and I live in Capitol Heights, Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Sforza

stephsforza@gmail.com

Capitol Heights, MD - 20743

SB431_Support_KKI_SignLanguage.pdf

Uploaded by: Arneson, Emily

Position: FAV



Kennedy Krieger Institute

DATE: February 9th, 2021 **COMMITTEE:** Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
BILL NO: Senate Bill 431
BILL TITLE: Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports Senate Bill 431 – Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act

Bill Summary:

Senate Bill 431 establishes a State Board of Sign Language Interpreters at the Maryland Department of Labor to promote effective communications for deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing persons.

Background:

Kennedy Krieger Institute is dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults with developmental, behavioral, cognitive and physical disabilities, including individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Kennedy Krieger's services include inpatient, outpatient, school-based and community-based programs. We have specific clinics that specialize in providing services that are designed with accessibility in mind, and work with deaf and hard-of-hearing children and families.

Our Deafness-Related Evaluations and More (DREAM) Clinic and Unity Clinics, both located at the Kennedy Krieger Institute provide direct access to evaluation and treatment for children and families who use American Sign Language. Kennedy Krieger Institute houses a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Access Program within the Institute that ensures that our patients, families, trainees and staff access competent and qualified sign language interpretation services when needed. Kennedy Krieger Institute employs, serves, and trains deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, and utilizes the services of appropriately certified sign language interpreters.

Rationale:

At present, Maryland residents who go to get their hair cut, a manicure, or a host of other professional services are assured that their service provider has minimum competence in the service offered by the service provider. Unfortunately, deaf and hard-of-hearing Maryland residents who require access to Sign Language interpretation services are not afforded the same assurances. **Maryland does not have any licensing or regulation of sign language interpreters.** Sign language interpreters carry out crucial roles in ensuring that information is conveyed accurately and completely in healthcare and in other important settings. Certified and appropriately licensed sign language interpreters can positively impact the health and well-being of Maryland residents in ensuring their access to critical healthcare information, of particular importance during this time in our collective history when access to accurate and timely health information is more important than ever. The need for deaf and hard-of-hearing Maryland residents to easily access appropriately qualified and licensed sign language interpreters has become critically important.

Licensure of sign language interpreters is essential to ensuring that sign language interpreters are appropriately trained and credentialed so that deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals are able to access proper information, care, and communication with their healthcare providers. Licensure of sign language interpreters serves as a title protection to prevent untrained individuals from inappropriately attempting to provide these services and targeting vulnerable populations. Licensure of sign language interpreters will also provide individuals who require access to interpretation with a mechanism for ensuring appropriate preparation for the job and with recourse for individuals who are the victim of untrained and unqualified individuals providing sign language interpretation. In our opinion, lack of licensure for these trained professionals will restrict access to information and communication to deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals and their families.

Kennedy Krieger Institute requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 431.

Congdon_finalMDIL_testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Congdon, Tara

Position: FAV

Tara Congdon
909 Roswell Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20901
720.235.0688
tschupner@gmail.com

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

I am a Deaf Maryland resident who is fluent in American Sign Language and rely on interpreters for access. I am writing in support of SB0431: The Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act.

It is vitally important that you establish interpreter licensure, for the safety and well-being of all Marylanders who depend on sign language interpreters to access health care, legal proceedings, employment, and many other facets of life in this state. Our lives, liberty, and pursuit of happiness—including pursuit of education and employment—depends on these interpreters being trained, skilled, qualified, and ethical. However, no mechanism exists to require that interpreters demonstrate their qualifications and ability to interpret, or to hold accountable individuals who pass themselves off as qualified but are not. As a result, abuse runs rampant throughout the state and far too many Deaf Marylanders have experienced horrifying, life-threatening situations created by these individuals. I describe only a sampling of many I have personally experienced in an appendix to this letter.

This bill is crucial not only for Deaf Marylanders, but for all hearing Marylanders who interact with or depend on Deaf people. These include children and relatives who depend on their Deaf parents or caretakers to make decisions about their health care and legal proceedings. When Deaf caretakers are provided incompetent, unqualified interpreters, they do not get the complete and accurate information they need to make these decisions, which can have serious consequences. This bill is also critical for the doctors, nurses, lawyers, and other professionals who provide services to Deaf patients and clients. Doctors, for example, rely on interpreters to collect and provide the necessary information to treat their Deaf patients to the same level and quality that they do their hearing patients. When these interpreters are not trained, skilled, qualified, or ethical, doctors do not get the accurate and complete information they need to appropriately and competently treat their Deaf patients, putting these patients at serious risk of injury or death.

Four years ago, my husband and I embarked on our fertility journey and then our journey as parents. This journey in itself has been long, difficult, expensive, and heart-wrenching. It has involved out-of-pocket costs exceeding \$35,000, failed cycles, and painful losses. The last thing we expected, and wanted, was for unqualified and unethical sign language interpreters to complicate it and make our journey even more difficult, expensive, and emotionally painful than it needed to be. We began this journey with trust in our medical care providers and interpreters.

That trust was repeatedly violated and we were repeatedly harmed and traumatized. I am convinced now that the only way to keep Deaf Marylanders like myself safe from incompetent and unethical interpreters is for the state of Maryland to step in and regulate them.

The appendix to this letter details some of our experiences to help you better understand the critical need for this bill. I hope you will take the time to read the appendix in its entirety. If you do not, please at least read the incidents that took place in June 2018 and on April 18, 2019. They encapsulate the dangers unqualified interpreters pose to Deaf patients' physical, emotional, and financial well-being.

To be sure, interpreter licensure will not solve all problems, but it will take significant steps toward 1) preventing uncertified, unqualified, unethical, and/or inexperienced individuals from taking interpreting assignments; and 2) providing a mechanism to hold these individuals accountable when they do. Currently, no such mechanism exists beyond filing civil rights complaints against doctor's offices, which is daunting for Deaf people when they depend on these doctors for health care, especially for chronic conditions and expensive, ongoing treatment. For example, once we signed our commitment with our fertility clinic, paid \$30,000 out of pocket for IVF treatment and drugs, went through egg retrieval, and had viable embryos, we were trapped because of the clinic's contract with an interpreting agency that repeatedly sent unqualified interpreters. We had to choose between accepting the frustrations, stress, and dangers caused by these "interpreters" and sacrificing our sunk costs—financial, time, and emotion—and worse, our embryos. We persevered and now have a beautiful daughter, but I continue to experience post-traumatic stress disorder from repeated abuse at the hands of these individuals.

You will hear objections from various parties to various aspects of this bill. Some of them, I agree with. Some, I don't. But I urge you to move this bill forward—with amendments if necessary to address concerns—because lives are at stake and Deaf Marylanders have suffered enough. Far too many individual interpreters, the agencies they work with, and the doctor's offices who contract these agencies are not putting Deaf patients' well-being first and ensuring appropriate communication access through qualified interpreters. This is why we desperately need mechanisms to screen interpreters and hold each of them accountable.

It is well past time for the Maryland legislature to do something about this. You have the opportunity before you to dramatically improve conditions for Deaf Marylanders and people who interact with, depend on, or support us throughout our state. Please do not pass up this opportunity.

Thank you,

Tara Congdon

Selected Incidents of Unqualified Medical Interpreting

- June 2018 – I went to my OB-GYN for an uterine endoscopy to try to identify the cause of our infertility. An uncertified interpreter I had encountered before and requested *not* return showed up to interpret the procedure. She omitted vital information while translating the pre-procedure discussion between myself and my doctor, during which my doctor explained options if I was unable to withstand the pain from the endoscopy. During the endoscopy, I expressed that I was experiencing pain but could continue. Instead of voicing this, the interpreter laid her hands on me and attempted to comfort me, informing me that she had experienced it before – a violation of interpreting ethics and an overstepping of boundaries. This distracted me so much that I asked the doctor to pause a moment; the interpreter voiced to the doctor that I was requesting to terminate the procedure. The doctor stopped, withdrew the scope, and informed me that the only alternative was an outpatient laparoscopic procedure under full anesthesia, which would cost me \$2,000 and require 2 days off work to heal. I was stunned and told her I wished I had known that before we started, and she told me she had communicated that. But the interpreter did not translate it. I had to proceed with the more invasive laparoscopy, endure even more physical pain, and absorb the financial blow and loss of work time.
- August 2018 – An uncertified interpreter showed up for a doctor’s appointment in which critical information about fertility and treatment options, including surgery, would be discussed. This interpreter mistranslated 50 percent of the spoken content and could not accurately voice 90 percent of signed content. The doctor and I eventually gave up, asked the interpreter to stand in a corner, and resorted to pen and paper to communicate with each other. When I called the interpreting agency afterward to object about the interpreter they sent and that we were unable to obtain all the information we needed to make critical decisions about options for fertility treatment, they sent me Edible Arrangements chocolate-covered apple slices as an apology.
- October 2018 – A recent graduate from an Interpreter Training Program outside Maryland and who had just moved to the area showed up to interpret an appointment with our fertility doctor, during which we were to receive very specific instructions for medication to take to prepare for our first attempt to become pregnant. The interpreter could not read my fingerspelling or signing, and she did not know the signs for very basic anatomical and medical terminology. I gave her a crash course about these signs in the waiting room. In the exam room, she voiced the complete opposite of everything I signed. When I asked the doctor to confirm that I should take a particular injection before another, and then take an oral medication at a particular time, she voiced that I was asking if I should take the second injection before the former, and *not* take the oral

medication. Confusion ensued between the doctor and myself. I had to begin signing extremely slowly, to the point the doctor could understand me before the interpreter did. And the doctor had to come face-to-face to me and speak very slowly and clearly so I could lipread her and ensure I understood every step of the course of medication and exactly when to take each injection or pill so that our \$4,000 investment in this procedure would not be wasted due to a timing or sequence error resulting from mistranslation.

- December 2018 – A very young, very inexperienced, first-year Interpreter Training Program student showed up to interpret an OB-GYN appointment which included an annual checkup, pap, and discussion about our fertility treatment. This student confessed that she had never interpreted an OB appointment and did not know basic interpreting etiquette, including where to stand or how to facilitate a translated conversation between doctor and patient. She also kept making comments like “this is so fascinating” and asking me questions about how and why things work or are done the way they are to women’s bodies and regarding pregnancy. Despite feeling extremely awkward—because it is not my job to do so—I strongly advised her to not take any more medical interpreting assignments until she had at least completed her training program, and more ideally, achieved certification.
- April 2019 – At a cardiology appointment, while describing my historical and current symptoms (some of which were side effects of fertility medication to prepare for our first embryo transfer), and my family history, an uncertified, inexperienced interpreter struggled to voice what I was signing. Every time I started signing, she panicked and lost her voice. The doctor was perplexed and could not understand what was happening. I took pen and paper and wrote to the doctor that this interpreter was not accurately translating *anything* I was saying. Finally, I instructed the interpreter that I was going to switch to Signed English, in which I signed every single word, in English word order, and that she was to voice, word for word, every word I signed *as* I signed it, very slowly. I had to support her through the entire appointment, which took longer than necessary and during which I was not able to communicate to my cardiologist the full extent of my symptoms or get a satisfactory understanding of treatment options.
- April 18, 2019 – Embryo transfer day. Also known as the first time in my life I kicked an interpreter out – not just out of the exam room, but off the assignment completely. She was an unqualified, unskilled, uncertified, recent ITP graduate who had just moved to Maryland. Her signing was unclear and I could not understand her translation of a nurse’s instructions, three times. When she missed or misheard something, she did not ask the doctor or nurses for clarification or to repeat; instead, she skipped over the information. When I asked my husband to help me understand, the interpreter interfered and said to me, “You don’t need to look at him, I’m interpreting this for you, you don’t need to ask

him for help.” She continuously mistranslated what I was signing, to the point my husband had to step in and correct her several times. She spoke to me like I was an unintelligent, uneducated child, and made comments about how she had never interpreted an embryo transfer before and that this was “going to be *so* fascinating!” She also spoke rudely to my doctor and, when my doctor attempted to give me consent forms to sign before he proceeded with the embryo transfer, the interpreter interrupted and instructed him to read the forms aloud so she could translate them into ASL for me. This confused the doctor because he knew me well and knew I preferred to read the forms for myself before signing them. At that point, I had had enough. I asked her politely to please leave the room so we could proceed with the embryo transfer without her disruptive presence. She refused and argued with me that she could do the job. I became extremely upset and was in tears because an already stressful—but exciting—day was now a nightmare. My doctor was extremely concerned, and my husband and I tried to explain to him that this interpreter was very problematic. She interrupted, undermined us, and told the doctor that I was just upset because she didn’t accurately translate my birth date. My husband and I both snapped at her blatant disrespect of us and our request, and with me sobbing, my husband yelled at her to leave the room, and we asked a nurse to make sure security escorted the interpreter from the building, to avoid any unpleasant scenes after the appointment. After the interpreter left, my doctor was staring at me in shock—he had always known me as a very calm, rational, unflappable person—and I had to explain, with my husband voicing for me, what had just happened. My doctor was so concerned about my emotional state that he was uncertain whether we should proceed with the embryo transfer because he was worried that all the negative hormones now in my system would affect the success of the transfer. But we had no choice because the embryo had been thawed. If we did not proceed, the embryo would have to be discarded. We proceeded, I became pregnant, and 12 weeks later, the baby died.

The reason you see a gap between April 2019 and November 2020 is because I became far more assertive about demanding that doctor’s offices allow me to select my interpreters for the rest of my fertility treatments, pregnancy, delivery, and pediatric appointments for our infant daughter. I spent many hours on the phone and email battling with individual doctor’s office staff and corporate general counsel, explaining the legal risks to them of continuing to use uncertified, unqualified interpreters for their Deaf patients and that these risks outweighed any contractual commitment to interpreting agencies that repeatedly send such individuals to interpret high-stakes medical appointments. This became an immensely stressful part-time job even as I struggled with working full-time while experiencing pregnancy symptoms amidst the uncertainty of what delivering during COVID-19 would involve, and caring for our newborn daughter.

- November 2020 – Our daughter was referred to a helmet place due to asymmetry of her skull. The practice refused to allow me to select the interpreter. An uncertified,

unqualified interpreter showed up to interpret, and he provided extremely inaccurate and incomplete translations in both directions. When he misheard or missed spoken information from the doctor, he waved his hands or skipped over it but in a way that was so smooth that I did not realize he was omitting significant chunks of information. When the doctor informed me that his practice could not treat my daughter and that he was sending us back to our pediatrician for further consultation, I did not understand why but due to the interpreter decided to wait and speak with our pediatrician. The next day, I spoke with our pediatrician over the phone and he told us that the doctor recommended our daughter see a neurosurgeon due to the type of skull asymmetry she had. I was shocked because at no point during the appointment did the interpreter ever sign the word neurosurgeon or that surgery on my daughter's skull would be necessary. The following week, I received paperwork from the doctor's office and it included all the details about the recommendation for neurosurgery referral and that the doctor had discussed this information with me during the appointment.

Terper1.pdf

Uploaded by: Faulkner, Peggy

Position: FAV

Hi, my name is Peggy Faulkner. I am a student at a University. I have had my struggles with unqualified interpreters at school and an internship. It affected both my education and my internship with the police department. It affected my supervisors and the administrators. In one situation, the interpreting agency hired a non-certified interpreter who had migrated from Japan. She was a novice interpreter and had recently learned ASL. We were shocked and appalled that the coordinator sent her to the police department without knowledge of American law. She spelled important vocabulary wrong including the term "probable cause." Because she was unqualified and still learning, her interpretation caused me to write the wrong legal vocabulary for my studies. Fortunately, the qualified team interpreter corrected her and decided to take over for the whole time. It was not fair for my qualified interpreter who interpreted for hours because of the team's incompetence. Situations like this are not uncommon. Thank goodness, my co-workers have caught some interpretation errors before we investigated cases. These errors could have affected those victims due to miscommunication and disfluency. A lot of unqualified interpreters are not trained in policy and ethics. My professors have been frustrated and worried that I could fail in classes. In another case, an agency hired a novice and non-certified interpreter for a college class of mine. She repeatedly asked my professor to repeat or ask her team many times for clarification. I politely asked the coordinator to replace this interpreter, but was told that she had Deaf family, so was qualified. I gave her several chances, but missed important class information each time. The coordinator wouldn't grant my request and I had no other recourse via the law. It got to a point where, in a law class I was taking, the interpreter was so unqualified and unethical and interrupted the class so often, that the professor complained and I eventually had to ask the interpreter to simply not to come back to class after asking her to recuse herself multiple times. I was willing to miss entire classes worth of information rather than get incorrect, incomplete interpretations that gave the illusion of access. We need a law to require qualified, licensed interpreters. This will help to protect my rights and give me a path to justice if anything bad happens to me and others because of an unqualified interpreter. Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony.

MOCO DISABILITY TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT MARYLAND SIGN

Uploaded by: Frey, Leslie

Position: FAV



COMMISSION ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Seth Morgan, M.D.
Chair

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF MARYLAND SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER ACT
SB431

Submitted by the Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities

February 5, 2021

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

The Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities writes to you to request your support of SB431- "Maryland Sign Language Interpreting Act" and extend our appreciation for giving this issue the time and consideration it deserves. We encourage you to pass this bill, as it will require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the State of Maryland and ensure that the Deaf community members have access to qualified sign language interpreters.

While we may see interpreters during emergency briefings or updates regarding the current pandemic, those interpreters do not need to be qualified by law. Consider the example in 2017 when Hurricane Irma was about to make landfall in Florida. The Manatee County Board of County Commissioners hired an "interpreter" to interpret emergency information for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing views. While one may think, providing an interpreter may seem like a proactive and inclusive consideration, little did they know that they did more harm than good. Manatee County hired the "interpreter" only because he knew some sign because his brother was Deaf. He had no training or specialized skills to be signing to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community in Florida. Due to his lack of training, he was warning the community in sign language of "Pizza" and "Bear Monster" when the mayor was saying "water is rising" and "evacuate now." You may be asking, how does this happen? Well, the simple answer is Florida does not require individuals to hold credentials or licenses to provide sign language interpreting services in any capacity.

Out of 50 states, only five states have no legislation about ASL-English Interpreters, Maryland being one of those five states. The story about the interpreter in Florida made national news and was an embarrassment to Florida. We need to protect our Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community in Maryland by ensuring that our Deaf and Hard of Hearing community has equal access to information. This includes accurate and up to date information. To achieve this, we must pass this bill to ensure that all interpreters practicing within the State of Maryland are qualified and licensed before working in the State.

According to the Governor's Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, there are over 1 million Deaf and Hard of Hearing residents in the State of Maryland. With our proximity to the world's only university, all programs and services are specifically designed to accommodate Deaf and Hard Hearing students. There

is no shortage of individuals who rely on interpreting services to navigate within a hearing world, whether it be a doctor's office, a job interview, or a press briefing; we must ensure that our interpreters in the State of Maryland are certified. SB431 will provide Maryland with the right tools and processes to ensure that practicing interpreters in Maryland are certified and held accountable.

This bill's passage is undeniably essential to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community in Maryland and is important for all residents in Maryland. With this bill's passage, we can ensure that everyone has equal access and everyone has the correct information. We urge you to support the passage of SB431- "Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act."

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Seth A. Morgan". The signature is written in black ink and features a long, sweeping tail that loops back under the name.

Seth A. Morgan, M.D.
Chair

Anne Braun_Written testimonial for SB431 Hearing.p

Uploaded by: Grigg, Kirsi

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Anne Braun. I am a Hearing Interpreter and I live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As an interested party, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Anne Braun

anne.braun2008@gmail.com

Laurel, MD 20723

Clifton Langdon_Written testimonial for SB431 Hear

Uploaded by: Grigg, Kirsi

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Dr. Clifton Langdon. I am a Deaf individual and live in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

Interpreters hold the power of human connection and many times in my life I have been in vulnerable positions in which I do not know if I have any recourse if something were to go wrong. I have encountered "interpreters" who are not trained and do not understand basic tenets of the field of interpretation. I have taught interpreters at college and I am married to an interpreter. As such, I am very familiar with all that goes into being an interpreter. This licensure bill will go a long way in ensuring that interpreters and consumers are both protected and that there is a transparent process that can ensure residents of Maryland like myself can be safer with interpreters that are licensed to facilitate person-to-person connections.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Dr. Clifton Langdon

aslilove@yahoo.com

Mount Rainier, MD - 20712

Daryl Frelich_Written testimonial for SB431 Hearin

Uploaded by: Grigg, Kirsi

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Daryl Frelich. I am a Deaf individual and I live in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Daryl Frelich

daryl.frelich@gallaudet.edu

Adamstown MD - 21710

Jerri Seremeth_Written testimonial for SB431 Heari

Uploaded by: Grigg, Kirsi

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Jerri Seremeth. I am a Deaf individual and I live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Jerri Seremeth

MarylandASLTA@gmail.com

Kirsi Grigg_Written testimonial for SB431 Hearing.

Uploaded by: Grigg, Kirsi

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Kirsi Grigg. I am a Deaf interpreter and I live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland like myself and my peers and help to ensure that members of the Deaf communities have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process. This bill is a consumer protection bill for all Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities in the state of Maryland.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Kirsi Grigg

KGriggL@gmail.com

Mt. Rainier, MD - 20712

Kiva Bennett_Written testimonial for SB431 Hearing

Uploaded by: Grigg, Kirsi

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Kiva Bennett. I am a Hearing Interpreter and I work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As an interested party, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Kiva Bennett

kiva.m.bennett@gmail.com

Washington DC 20020

Matthew Lockhart_ Written testimonial for SB431 Hea

Uploaded by: Grigg, Kirsi

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Matthew Lockhart. I am a Deaf individual and I live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Matthew Lockhart

mlockhart16@gmail.com

Frederick, MD - 21074

Michelle AiStock_Written testimonial for SB431 He

Uploaded by: Grigg, Kirsi

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Michelle Ailstock. I am a Deaf individual and I live in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Michelle Ailstock

mlockhart16@gmail.com

Mt Airy, MD 21771

Wink Smith Jr_ Written testimonial for SB431 Hearin

Uploaded by: Grigg, Kirsi

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Wink Smith Jr. I have Deaf/DeafBlind/Hard of Hearing relatives and I work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As an interested party, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Wink Smith Jr

Wink@WinkASL.com

Frederick, MD

MDAD President Jeffries_ Written testimonial for SB

Uploaded by: Jeffries, Richard

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Richard Jeffries. I am writing this testimony of support on behalf of the Maryland Association of the Deaf. I ask the committee to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Richard Jeffries

president@mdad.tv

President, Maryland Association of the Deaf

Burtonsville MD - 20866

Richard Jeffries written testimonial for SB431 Hea

Uploaded by: Jeffries, Richard

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Richard Jeffries. I am a Deaf individual and I live in Ellicott City, Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Richard Jeffries

richardjeffries@gmail.com

Ellicott City, MD - 21043

Alicia Balzer Farias_ Written testimonial for SB431

Uploaded by: MDAD President, MDAD President

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Alicia Balzer Farias. I am a Deaf individual and live in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Alicia Balzer Farias

alicia.balzer@gmail.com

Frederick, MD

Charm Smith written testimonial for SB431 Hearing

Uploaded by: MDAD President, MDAD President

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Charm L. Smith. I am a Deaf individual and I live in Ellicott City, Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Charm L. Smith

charmlisa@gmail.com

Ellicott City, MD - 20712

Darla Konkel Written testimonial for SB431 Hearing

Uploaded by: MDAD President, MDAD President

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Darla Konkel. I am a Deaf Interpreter and I live in Washington, DC. I visit Maryland often. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As an interested party, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Darla Konkel

darlakonkel@gmail.com

Washington, DC - 20002

Lee Smith Written testimonial for SB431 Hearing -

Uploaded by: MDAD President, MDAD President

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Lee Smith. I am a Deaf individual and I live in Severn, Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Lee Smith

smithlee11@gmail.com

Severn, MD - 21144

Mark Summers Written testimonial for SB431 Hearing

Uploaded by: MDAD President, MDAD President

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Mark Summers. I am a Deaf individual and I live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Mark Summers

thinker623@gmail.com

Germantown, MD - 20874

Mary O'Hara _ Written testimonial for SB431 Hearin

Uploaded by: MDAD President, MDAD President

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Mary O'Hara. I am a Deaf individual and I live in Germantown, Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Mary O'Hara

failte.molly@gmail.com

Germantown, MD - 20874

Rae Johnson_Written testimonial for SB431 Hearing

Uploaded by: MDAD President, MDAD President

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Rae Johnson. I am a Deaf individual and I live in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

I've had unlicensed interpreters who were not certified who made discussions about cancer treatments difficult for both my doctor and me.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Rae Johnson

raejohnson21@gmail.com

Laurel, MD - 20708

Shannon Cooley written testimonial for SB431 Heari

Uploaded by: MDAD President, MDAD President

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Shannon M. Cooley. I am a Deaf individual and I live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Shannon M. Cooley

ms.shannoncooley@gmail.com

Baltimore, MD - 21201

Stephen Blumstein_Written testimonial for SB431 He

Uploaded by: MDAD President, MDAD President

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Stephen Blumstein. I am a Deaf individual and live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Stephen Blumstein

sdblumstein@gmail.com

Germantown, MD - 20874

Thomas Hattaway Written testimonial for SB431 Hear

Uploaded by: MDAD President, MDAD President

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Thomas Hattaway. I am a Deaf individual and I live in Cloverly, Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Thomas Hattaway
tomhattaway@icloud.com
Cloverly, MD - 20905

SB0431 MD NARAL SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Philip, Diana

Position: FAV



SB0431 – Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act

Presented to the Honorable Senator Paul G. Pinsky and Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

February 9, 2021 1:00 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee to issue a **favorable report on SB0431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act**, sponsored by Senator Nancy King and Senator Guy Guzzone.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. As part of our efforts to protect reproductive freedom for all Marylanders, we work to ensure every individual has the right to decide if, when, and how to form their families, and to parent in good health, in safety, and with dignity. Access to sign language interpretation is a reproductive justice issue. Nationally, disabled parents are assumed to have “lower competence” when making decisions about their bodies, unjustly judged for their parenting abilities, and have less access to reproductive care.ⁱ We support ensuring accessible resources for those who are deaf and hard of hearing to increase access to care and advocate for bodily autonomy for disabled communities.

There are over 1.2 million deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Maryland.ⁱⁱ Approximately 13% of Marylanders have significant hearing loss in both ears, which means at least 1 in 10 individuals will potentially be in need of ASL interpretation services across our state. The largest deaf community in Maryland is in Frederick County alone with around 8,000 people.ⁱⁱⁱ There are also more than 75 deaf-owned business in Maryland.^{iv} Despite the Maryland School of Deaf and other resources in Frederick County, this is not the case in other Maryland counties. Therefore, there is a clear need to develop a statewide intervention to ensure that all Maryland citizens have access to interpretation services.

There are substantial barriers for the deaf and hard of hearing community. The Governor’s office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing reported that more than 80% of this population are either underemployed or unemployed.^v Additionally, deaf patients also find it difficult to receive healthcare services due to a lack of interpretation services.^{vi} Even though federal disability law requires hospitals to have interpretation services deaf and hard of hearing individuals, many Maryland advocates state these services are inadequate.^{vi}

SB0431 can help to reduce the barriers of inaccessibility for the deaf and hard of hearing residents of Maryland. This bill helps to establish a state board of Sign Language Interpreters in the Maryland Department of Labor, which will regulate who is allowed to provide sign language interpretation services. This bill recognizes the importance of providing and supporting quality interpretation services by drafting and implementing licensing requirements for interpreters and establishing a Sign Language Interpreters Fund. For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on SB0154**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

-
- ⁱ Silvers, Anita, Leslie Francis, and Brittany Badesch. "Reproductive Rights and Access to Reproductive Services for Women with Disabilities." *Journal of Ethics* | American Medical Association. American Medical Association, April 1, 2016. <https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/reproductive-rights-and-access-reproductive-services-women-disabilities/2016-04>.
- ⁱⁱ "Over 1.2 Million Deaf and Hard of Hearing Marylanders," Governor's Office of The Deaf and Hard of Hearing, n.d., <https://odhh.maryland.gov/featured-story/over-1-2-million-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing-marylanders/>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Gaines, Danielle E. "Deaf Couple Bring Pizazz, Personalization with Embroidery Business." *The Fredrick News-Post*, February 17, 2015. https://www.fredericknewspost.com/places/local/frederick_county/frederick/deaf-couple-bring-pizazz-personalization-with-embroidery-business/article_c9367c86-ae6b-577f-bd60-3ab877825111.html.
- ^{iv} Morris, Amanda. "Deaf And Unemployed: Taking Matters Into Their Own Hands." NPR. NPR, January 13, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/13/673250200/The%20number%20of%20Deaf%20businesses%20on%20our%20list%20has%20grown%20significantly%20in%20the%20past%20couple%20of%20years>.
- ^v "Deaf Ecosystem." Governor's Office of The Deaf and Hard of Hearing, n.d. <https://odhh.maryland.gov/deaf-ecosystem/>.
- ^{vi} McDaniels, Andrea K. "Deaf Patients Say It Can Be Difficult to Communicate at Hospitals." *baltimoresun.com*. Baltimore Sun, August 19, 2019. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/health/bs-hs-sign-language-hospital-20150913-story.html>.

Md Interpreter Licensure Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Puzio, Leslie

Position: FAV

February 5, 2021

Dear Honorable Representatives:

We are writing in reference to SB0431/HB0535 which will establish a licensure procedure for Maryland Sign Language Interpreters.

We are the directors of the Community College of Baltimore County's Sign Language Interpreter Training Program and the Frederick Community College Interpreter Preparatory Program. Our programs are the only two programs in the state of Maryland that train interpreters to work with the deaf. Deaf people need well-trained interpreters to provide them with accessibility per their rights outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act. Our programs provide students with an AAS in Interpreting, however for our graduates to obtain national certification they also need to complete a baccalaureate degree.

The licensing procedure established by this bill is dependent on interpreters obtaining national certification through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. In order to sit for the test through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, test candidates must hold a minimum of a baccalaureate degree.

The Community College of Baltimore County would still wish to consider offering an applied baccalaureate in the future. FCC is pursuing other ways to further improve our student's skills to also meet the needs of the deaf community, as well as prepare them for the requirements of this bill.

Maryland currently has no regulations which determine who can market themselves an interpreter. Sadly, Maryland deaf citizens often find themselves in situations where the interpreter that was hired for their appointment (doctor appointment, college class, job interview etc...) is not qualified and in some cases has never been trained and/or does not actually know American Sign Language (ASL). Some deaf children, who are mainstreamed in Maryland's K-12 system are being exposed to unqualified language models; stagnating their cognitive development and they have no voice.

This bill is an attempt to set up an aggressive licensing procedure, which will protect deaf children and adults. We support the concept of licensure and support this bill with a few minor changes.

Please support SB0431/HB0535 with the following changes:

- Page 6 line 25 should read "A medical setting, unless the individual is accompanied by a licensed sign language interpreter" If interns can enter an "emergency medical" setting they should also be welcomed in routine medical settings with supervision.
- Page 6 line 28 - add "unless the individual is accompanied by a licensed sign language interpreter" as a way for us to be able to train upcoming educational interpreters.
- Page 6 line 29 - add "unless the individual is accompanied by a licensed sign language interpreter" so that we can train students remotely especially during the pandemic and beyond..

All of our requests will help ensure that we are able to provide appropriate training/mentoring opportunities for interns in our Interpreter Training Programs.

If you have any questions or would like more information please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

Rebecca F. Minor, Ph.D. | INTR Program Coordinator – Associate Professor | The Community College of Baltimore County – Interpreter Preparation Program | 443-840-4975 (W) | 443-341-5031 (VP) | 443-840-5134 (fax) | rminor3@ccbcmd.edu -

Dr. Leslie Puzio (she/her/hers) . *Ed.D., M.P.A, NIC*
Assistant Professor & Program Manager . ASL & ASL Interpreter Preparatory Program
Frederick Community College . lpuzio@frederick.edu . 301.624.2783 (W)

Arturs Kivitis_Written testimonial for SB431 Heari

Uploaded by: Summers, Stephanie

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Arturs Kivitis. I am a Deaf individual and I live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Arturs Kivitis

latkis17@gmail.com

Cheverly, MD 20785

Chet Virnig_Written testimonial for SB431 Hearing

Uploaded by: Summers, Stephanie

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Chet Virnig. I am a Deaf individual and I live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Chet Virnig

chvirnig@me.com

Frederick, MD - 21702

Haley Solomon Written testimonial for SB431 Hearin

Uploaded by: Summers, Stephanie

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Haley C. Solomon. I am a Deaf individual and I live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Haley C. Solomon

hcsolomon@gmail.com

Frederick, MD - 21705

Heather Virnig_Written testimonial for SB431 Heari

Uploaded by: Summers, Stephanie

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Heather Virnig. I am a Deaf individual and I live in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Heather Virnig

heathervirnig@me.com

Frederick, MD 21702

Jonathan Summers_Written testimonial for SB431 Hea

Uploaded by: Summers, Stephanie

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Jonathan Summers. I am a Deaf individual and I live in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

Licensing for interpreters helps to ensure that they are qualified to provide equal and equitable access wherever they may be called upon to do so. Having qualified interpreters helps Deaf and DeafBlind individuals trust that they can communicate clearly and accurately. With licensed interpreters, Deaf/DeafBlind people can trust they are getting accurate medical information from their doctors, understand what's being said by a lawyer, and successfully communicate wherever and whenever they use an interpreter.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Summers

jsummers2032@gmail.com

Kimberly Kivitis_Written testimonial for SB431 Hea

Uploaded by: Summers, Stephanie

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Kimberly Kivitis. I am a Deaf individual and I live in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Kivitis

kimberlyhuseby@gmail.com

Cheverly, MD 20785

Lore Rosenthal_Written testimonial for SB431 Heari

Uploaded by: Summers, Stephanie

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Lore Rosenthal. I am a Hearing interpreter and live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

Maryland has waited too long to pass legislation of this sort.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Lore Rosenthal

SimplicityGroupsMD@gmail.com

Greenbelt, MD

Marian Mahoney written testimonial for SB431 Heari

Uploaded by: Summers, Stephanie

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Marian Mahoney. I am a Hearing individual and I live in Cheverly, Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Marian Mahoney

lage.marian@gmail.com

Cheverly, MD - 20785

Paige Motley Written testimonial for SB431 Hearing

Uploaded by: Summers, Stephanie

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Paige Motley, I am a hearing ally of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and/or Hard of Hearing communities and I live in Crofton, Maryland.

I am writing to ask you to support SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021 sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

I urge you to support this important piece of legislation.

I am in my senior year of college about to graduate with a degree in Educational Interpreting. This is so important for my future career as an interpreter. I am a proud ally and stand with the Deaf community!

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Paige Motley

pmotley268@gmail.com

Crofton, MD - 21114

Rebecca Rosenbarker_Written testimonial for SB431

Uploaded by: Summers, Stephanie

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Rebecca Rosenbarker. I live and work in Maryland and I have Deaf/DeafBlind/Hard of Hearing relatives. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Rosenbarker

rebeccarose622@gmail.com

Walkersville, MD - 21793

Stephanie Summers written testimonial for SB431 He

Uploaded by: Summers, Stephanie

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Stephanie Summers. I am a Deaf individual and I live and work in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

This bill is a consumer protection bill for both deaf and hearing consumers. The interpreter profession needs to be recognized for their expertise in the field and not be diminished.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support SB431.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Summers

srsummers4@gmail.com

Germantown, MD - 20874

Talking Points for MDIL Senate Hearing - Google Do

Uploaded by: Summers, Stephanie

Position: FAV

Maryland Interpreter License Team's SB431 Oral Testimonial for Senate Hearing

- Consumer protection bill
- According to Director Brick of the MD GODHH, MD is the only state with no regulation of sign language interpreters.
- Some may wonder why we house the bill under the Department of Labor with support from the ODHH because ODHH is a partisan office serving at the pleasure of the Governor.
- There are businesses in Maryland that already follow the practices outlined in this bill. They believe in the spirit of what we are proposing.
- The businesses who would oppose the bill are the ones who have been hiring non-qualified, non-certified, and in some instances, fraudulent interpreters. The practice is being done because there is a lack of regulation or enforcement of such and there are no consequences.
- These unqualified interpreters are exploited by these businesses because they are put in situations in which they believe is sanctioned by the business and therefore, sound.
- Horror stories: Tara's & Peg's stories
- Deaf people live with the reality that their voices might never be truly heard. This bill provides a way for the state to recognize that protections ensure we don't lose before we even get a chance to try.
- Because there is a lack of consumer protection, there have been cases where medical and legal ramifications are permanent and life-changing. There is no telling the countless voiceless that have suffered from this lack of protection.

Stats/Numbers

468 Certified Interpreters: Live in Maryland

124 Certified Interpreters: Live in DC

82 Certified Interpreters: Live in North Va

25 Certified Interpreters: Live in Del

Total Interpreters Available to Serve Maryland from Region: 699

SB431Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Tucker, Neal

Position: FAV



The Honorable Chairman Senator Pinsky
The Honorable Vice Chair Senator Kagan
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

To The Honorable Chairman Pinsky and Vice Chair Kagan:

I write to convey the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc (RID) support for SB431- Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act. RID was established in 1964 and incorporated in 1972 as a 501 (c)(3) non-profit membership organization promoting the welfare and growth of individual interpreters as well as the profession of interpretation of American Sign Language and English. In order to promote excellence in interpreting, all interpreters should demonstrate skill, knowledge, and ability through the attainment and maintenance of certification. State regulation of interpreting is a mechanism through which this goal can be more fully realized; SB431 provides that opportunity and is the result of significant collaboration between the Potomac Chapter of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (PCRID) and the Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD).

The need for state regulation of interpreters began in the early 1970s but pales in comparison to the effects produced by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which was enacted in 1990. This landmark legislation transformed the face of professional interpreting and caused the demand for interpreting services to soar to unprecedented heights. The ADA defines a “qualified interpreter” as one, “...who is able to interpret effectively, accurately and impartially both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary.” This definition, unfortunately, continues to cause a great deal of confusion among consumers, service providers and professional interpreters. While the definition empowers deaf and hearing consumers to demand effective communication, it provides no assistance to hiring entities (who are mandated by ADA to provide interpreter services) in determining who is “qualified” before services are provided. This is a critical point. Without the tools or mechanisms to identify who has attained some level of competency, hiring entities are ill-prepared to satisfy the mandates of ADA in locating and providing “qualified” interpreter services. State regulation of interpreters better protects all parties in an interpreted interaction.

As stated by Director Kelby Brick of the Maryland Governor’s Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, currently, Maryland is the only state that does not have any form of oversight pertaining to the profession of American Sign Language Interpreters. Nearly every state across the country is faced with the issue of



regulating the interpreting profession and practice. This is an issue of great importance considering the impact these decisions can have on the quality of service all consumers receive, as well as the state of the interpreting profession. RID supports the regulation of interpreters to ensure excellence in services delivered to the Deaf community. The impetus is now on you and the committee to pass SB431 to implement high standards that meet the professional needs of interpreters, the linguistic needs of the Deaf community, and the administrative needs of hiring entities.

RID is ready to assist the Committee should there be any questions. We also encourage the Committee to seek guidance from the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) who have long advocated for the implementation of licensure for American Sign Language Interpreters across the country.

Submitted by:

Neal Tucker

NTucker@RID.org

Director of Member Services & Government Affairs

The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc.

333 Commerce Street

Alexandria, VA 22314

SB0431-793823-01.pdf

Uploaded by: Horton, Patty

Position: FWA



SB0431/793823/1

AMENDMENTS
PREPARED
BY THE
DEPT. OF LEGISLATIVE
SERVICES

05 FEB 21
09:39:25

BY: Senator King
(To be offered in the Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs Committee)

AMENDMENT TO SENATE BILL 431

(First Reading File Bill)

On page 5, in lines 14 and 17, in each instance, after “**ORAL**” insert “**OR SIGNED**”.

SB0431-813525-01.pdf

Uploaded by: Horton, Patty

Position: FWA



SB0431/813525/1

AMENDMENTS
PREPARED
BY THE
DEPT. OF LEGISLATIVE
SERVICES

05 FEB 21
09:35:14

BY: Senator King
(To be offered in the Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs Committee)

AMENDMENT TO SENATE BILL 431

(First Reading File Bill)

On page 6, strike beginning with “**IS**” in line 29 down through “**SETTING;**” in line 30.

On page 7, in line 1, strike “**(3)**”; in lines 3, 11, 14, and 17, strike “**(4)**”, “**(5)**”, “**(6)**”, and “**(7)**”, respectively, and substitute “**(3)**”, “**(4)**”, “**(5)**”, and “**(6)**”, respectively.

SB431 - King - Sponsor Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Horton, Patty

Position: FWA

NANCY J. KING
Legislative District 39
Montgomery County

MAJORITY LEADER



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 121
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3686 · 410-841-3686
800-492-7122 Ext. 3686
Fax 301-858-3670 · 410-841-3670
Nancy.King@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Bill 431 – Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act

February 9, 2021

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

There are over one million people in Maryland who are Deaf or hard of hearing, but Maryland is one of the very few states in the country to require standards or licensing requirements that would offer protection from unqualified or fraudulent interpreters. Unqualified interpreters can cause irreparable harm to an individual, especially in medical and legal settings.

The legislature has recognized that this is problematic and in the 2020 Joint Chairmen's Report (JCR), they requested that the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GODHH) provide a response on "ways to protect and serve users of sign language interpreting services." The GODHH responded with a thirteen page report and five different strategies. Their report can be found at: [2020_p18_GODHH_Interpreters.pdf](#) ([maryland.gov](#)).

One of the strategies mention in the report is creation of licensing for sign language interpreters. Twenty two states in the county have a licensing requirement of sign language interpreters. Senate Bill 431 – Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act – will set the framework for licensing in Maryland. I am also introducing 2 amendments. One adds language that recognizes that there is oral to sign, sign to oral, as well as sign to sign interpreting. The second amendment will require licensing for those individuals involved with video remote interpreting.

Deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Maryland deserve sign language interpreters that have the proper training and qualifications for the job and so I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 431 with amendments.

SB0431_testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Minor, Rebecca

Position: FWA

Dear Honorable Representatives:

We are writing in reference to SB0431/HB0535 which will establish a licensure procedure for Maryland Sign Language Interpreters. We are the directors of the Community College of Baltimore County's Sign Language Interpreter Training Program and the Frederick Community College Interpreter Preparatory Program. Our programs are the only two programs in the state of Maryland that train interpreters to work with the deaf. Deaf people need well-trained interpreters to provide them with accessibility per their rights outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act. Our programs provide students with an AAS in Interpreting, however for our graduates to obtain national certification they also need to complete a baccalaureate degree.

The licensing procedure established by this bill is dependent on interpreters obtaining national certification through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. In order to sit for the test through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, test candidates must hold a minimum of a baccalaureate degree.

The Community College of Baltimore County would still wish to consider an applied baccalaureate in the future. FCC is pursuing other ways to further improve our student's skills to also meet the needs of the deaf community, as well as prepare them for the requirements of this bill.

Maryland currently has no regulations which determine who can market themselves an interpreter. Sadly, Maryland deaf citizens often find themselves in situations where the interpreter that was hired for their appointment (doctor appointment, college class, job interview etc...) is not qualified and in some cases has never been trained and/or does not actually know American Sign Language (ASL). Some deaf children, who are mainstreamed in Maryland's K-12 system are being exposed to unqualified language models; stagnating their cognitive development and they have no voice.

This bill is an attempt to set up an aggressive licensing procedure, which will protect deaf children and adults. We support the concept of licensure and support this bill with a few minor changes.

Please support SB0431/HB0535 with the following changes:

- Page 6 line 25 should read "A medical setting, unless the individual is accompanied by a licensed sign language interpreter" If interns can enter an "emergency medical" setting they should also be welcomed in routine medical settings with supervision.
- Page 6 line 28 - add "unless the individual is accompanied by a licensed sign language interpreter" as a way for us to be able to train upcoming educational interpreters.
- Page 6 line 29 - add "unless the individual is accompanied by a licensed sign language interpreter" so that we can train students remotely especially during the pandemic and beyond..

All of our requests will help ensure that we are able to provide appropriate training/mentoring opportunities for interns in our Interpreter Training Programs.

If you have any questions or would like more information please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

Rebecca F. Minor, Ph.D. | [INTR Program Coordinator – Associate Professor](#) | [The Community College of Baltimore County – Interpreter Preparation Program](#) | 443-840-4975 (W) | 443-341-5031 (VP) | 443-840-5134 (fax) | rminor3@ccbcmd.edu -

Dr. Leslie Puzio (she/her/hers)

Ed.D., M.P.A, NIC

Assistant Professor & Program Manager

ASL & ASL Interpreter Preparatory Program

lpuzio@frederick.edu

Frederick Community College

7932 Opposumtown Pike

Frederick, Maryland 21771

MD Judiciary - Testimony SB 431.pdf

Uploaded by: Elalamy, Sara

Position: UNF

MARYLAND JUDICIAL CONFERENCE
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Hon. Mary Ellen Barbera
Chief Judge

187 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
FROM: Legislative Committee
Suzanne Pelz
410-260-1523
RE: Senate Bill 431
Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act
DATE: January 27, 2021
(2/9)
POSITION: Oppose

The Maryland Judiciary opposes Senate Bill 431. This bill creates the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters in the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation. The Board will regulate individuals who provide sign language interpretation services in the State, including those who interpret in a “legal setting,” defined to include court proceedings, attorney-client conferences, investigations by law enforcement, depositions, witness interviews, real estate settlements and administrative hearings.

The bill will have a significant operational impact on the Judiciary. The Maryland Judiciary operates a large Court Interpreter Program, providing in-person interpreters for court events and services throughout the State. In Fiscal Year 2020, the Program provided in-person interpreters for 12,805 events. In Fiscal Year 2020, 10% (1,285) of those assignments were for American Sign Language (ASL) services. The use of court interpreters decreased during Fiscal Year 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 health emergency. Fiscal Year 2019 represents a more typical year. During Fiscal Year the Program provided in-person interpreters for 15,558 court events, of which 8.5% (1,336) were for ASL services.

The Program maintains a Maryland Court Interpreter Registry of those eligible to serve in the Maryland courts. Maryland Rule 1-333 requires that courts assign an interpreter from the registry when possible. The court may appoint a non-registry interpreter only if a registry interpreter is not available. The Maryland Court Interpreter Program requires new ASL interpreters be certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). (Some ASL interpreters on the Registry hold a certification from the National Association of the Deaf although that organization no longer provides certification. Maryland Rule 1-333 permits ASL interpreters to have either certification).

Additional information about court language services is available in the recent report, [Language Services in the Maryland Courts – FY2020](#).

The bill may reduce the pool of certified sign language interpreters allowed to serve in court proceedings and for court services, which may increase the cost of providing the service. The bill as drafted would require the Judiciary to assign only ASL interpreters licensed by the Board. The Board will not be providing testing or certification itself, but will determine the licensing requirements for interpreters in a legal setting. The bill provides for a provisional license for those who do not meet the full qualifications, but provisional licensees are precluded from serving in a legal setting under the bill.

Most of the ASL interpreters on the Judiciary's Registry have a National Interpreter Certification (NIC) from the RID. Some may have older certificates which are no longer issued (Certificate of Interpretation (CI) or Certificate of Transliteration (CT)). In the past, RID issued a legal specialty certification (SC:L) but that was put on moratorium in 2016. As a result, there is a shortage of interpreters who currently hold a legal specialty certification. There are few, if any organizations certifying that ASL interpreters have expertise in a legal setting.

Some courts experience difficulty securing ASL interpreters on a timely basis when needed. This is especially true in rural jurisdictions and for District Court commissioners after hours. A reduction in the pool may lead to additional postponements or require key services to be rescheduled, resulting in delays in bringing cases to disposition. A reduced pool of ASL interpreters may also result in an increase in the hourly rate the Judiciary must pay to secure ASL services. The Judiciary typically pays \$65 – \$75 for ASL services. Because it is unclear how many interpreters will be licensed and available to serve in a legal setting, it is impossible to estimate the operational and fiscal impact of a reduction in the pool.

In addition, the Maryland Judiciary has several mechanisms in place to ensure quality assurance of all court interpreters including ASL interpreters.

Handbook and Code of Conduct. Interpreter policies are outlined in the Maryland Court Interpreter Handbook and all interpreters on the Maryland Court Interpreter Registry are required to provide a signed acknowledgement that they have received an understand the policies in the Handbook, including the Maryland Code of Conduct for Court Interpreters.

Complaint Protocol and Forms. The Maryland Judiciary provides a complaint procedure and forms the public and judges and court staff can use to report a concern about a Registry interpreter. That information is available on the Judiciary's website. All complaints are fully investigated by staff and reviewed by a subcommittee of the Maryland Judicial Court Access & Community Relations Committee.

Grievance Procedure. In addition, deaf and hard of hearing individuals concerned about the quality of an accommodation provided by the Maryland courts can submit a grievance

through the Office of Fair Practices. The procedure and forms are available on the Judiciary website. The Court Interpreter Program receives very few complaints about sign language interpreters. The program last received a complaint about a sign language interpreter in 2018.

Accommodations Page and Court Accessibility Toolkit. The Judiciary provides a public web page to aid individuals seeking an [accommodation](#). In addition, the Judiciary maintains a comprehensive [Court Accessibility Toolkit](#) to aid judges, magistrates, and court staff in responding effectively to the needs of persons with disabilities. Several resources directly address how courts can provide appropriate accommodations for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Further, this bill may restrict the Judiciary's use of interpreters in a Video Remote Interpreting Setting and Video Relay Settings, applications which have become increasingly important during the COVID-19 health emergency. The bill defines "video remote interpreting setting" and "video relay settings." It provides that the licensing requirement of the bill does not apply to interpreters in a video remote interpreting setting or vide relay setting. The current version of the bill requires licensing in a legal setting, but that definition does not exclude interpreting in a remote setting. It is not clear whether the licensing requirement would apply to the Judiciary's use of remote video remote interpreting in a legal setting.

The Maryland Judiciary uses video remote interpreting in two contexts. The Judiciary currently provides remote ASL services, using a state contract with an ASL provider. It appears this may be what is referred to as a "video relay service." This is often used for interactions with court staff, commissioners, or outside the courtroom setting. The Judiciary has also pivoted during the COVID-19 health emergency to make extensive use of video technology to facilitate remote court proceedings. Maryland court interpreters regularly participate in these proceedings. When those interpreters are providing ASL service, this would fall under the definition of "video remote interpreting" as defined in the act.

If all legal settings require ASL interpreters be licensed by the state, the bill will have a significant operational and fiscal impact on the Judiciary. It may preclude the use of the existing remote ASL contract. Remote ASL is used to permit court staff to speak with deaf or hard of hearing individuals who seek assistance at the court. Requiring remote providers to have a Maryland license will reduce the number of vendors available to provide the service, which may increase the cost of the service. In the alternative, it may eliminate the Judiciary's ability to use the service, and may require that deaf and hard of hearing individuals return to the court at a later time when an in-person interpreter can be scheduled. It would also limit the ability of the court to use its current pool of Registry interpreters for remote court proceedings.

The bill would also restrict access to justice by making it more difficult for individuals to secure qualified ASL interpreters in order to meet with counsel or participate in a broad range of legal proceedings. The bill has broad applicability and would apply to meetings

between attorneys and their clients. ASL services are expensive and special licensing requirements will reduce the number of individuals who can provide the service in those contexts and increase the cost. Requiring special certification for those types of meetings may impede or delay individuals from seeking the assistance of counsel or from getting legal help from a hotline or legal service provider.

In addition, the court enforcement provisions would interfere with existing court processes and standards. Section 22-405 of the bill provides that a party who receives sign language services from an individual in violation of the title, may bring an action seeking an injunction to prohibit the individual from providing sign language interpretation services. The bill sets standards and penalties under this provision. These provisions of the bill would override established procedures and standards for injunctions delineated in Title 15, Chapter 500 of the Maryland Rules.

The bill would also create additional standards for ASL interpreters already provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and corresponding federal regulations. Title II of the Act addresses government services and requires that communications with “applicants, participants, members of the public, and companions” with disabilities be as effective as communications with others. (28 C.F.R. § 35.160(a)(1)). Federal regulations require that public entities “furnish appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to afford individuals with disabilities. . . an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of a service, program or activity of a public entity.” (28 C.F.R. § 35.160). These auxiliary aids and services may include, where necessary interpreters, written materials, qualified readers, large print materials, as well as equipment or devices that must be acquired or modified.

Finally, this bill would impede judicial independence. The Judiciary administers the judicial system and sets standards for professionals serving in the Maryland courts. The bill grants authority for regulating ASL interpreters serving in a court setting to an Executive Branch agency which would erode the separation of powers. The Judiciary has a strong interpreter program which has adopted and uses examinations and standards developed by the Council of Language Access Coordinators of the National Center for State Courts. If the State were to assume authority for regulating ASL interpreters, it may, at some point in the future, impose regulations for foreign language interpreters on the courts, which would be a further erosion of the separation of powers.

cc. Hon. Nancy King
Judicial Council
Legislative Committee
Kelley O’Connor